he gives of the pleasures of lewdness and greediness'. But *poetry* is not the same as a sense of humour, and the comedy of the scene is dependent on Sir Epicure's self-absorbed earnestness; his hyperboles derive from his single-minded concentration on images of lust which so control him (like the poet's frenzy) that he finds inspiration in them. Again, the comedy depends on incongruity between the elegance and invention of the images and the predatory lasciviousness which they express.

It is all the more regrettable that Professor Herbert persists in disabling his book with the albatross of his theory of comedy, because he has good insights into the nature of Trollope's fiction particularly concerning that insistent realism which refuses to accept the ideal as possible in human society, his refusal 'to fudge human nature', and his fascination with the deterioration of moral sensibility. In Trollope's best novels there is a compelling sense of gradual growth, of what people become as they make their moral choices in the society which they inhabit. This is related to the structure of the novels.

Dr Hamer puts it well when she writes of the implications of phrases used in the number endings of *The Small House at Allington*: 'They are . . . not so much clues planted for the reader as seeds which germinate in the minds of author and reader together.' Dr Hamer's scheme is not as ambitious as Professor Herbert's but her study of the effects of serialization on Trollope's art is useful and perceptive. By examining the differences between his first eight novels, published in the conventional three volumes, and *Framley Parsonage* and some of the following serializations, Dr Hamer argues that in this form Trollope learnt to use the implications of dialogue rather than rely on the authorial directing voice, that he gained in psychological insight and began to develop the inner logic of his narratives. Dr Hamer writes of Trollope's representation of Lily Dale in *The Small House at Allington*: 'He kept returning to Lily at number-ends, giving a prominence new in his work to the investigation of a single personality' (pp. 108–9). She sees this increased perception at war with the stereotype of Lily as heroic female sufferer at the novel's conclusion. Professor Herbert sees the ending of the novel as an example of 'Trollope's inexhaustibly patient inspection of the subtleties of moral fiber and of the limits of comic tolerance'—Trollope will not *fudge* and provide a happy ending. Neither account quite does justice to Trollope's ability to suggest the inexorable effect of experience upon character. Lily Dale and Eames do not, as Professor Herbert suggests, fail by a hair's breadth to come together. Lily, after her experience in loving the adventurer Crosbie, *cannot* marry Johnny without violating herself. She has been disabled by her misadventure. It is the misery, both moral and personal, of this situation which Trollope suggests so well at the end of *The Small House at Allington*, and it is the logical conclusion of Lily's development through the novel. It is not a question of Trollope's *teasing* the reader with the possibility of a happy ending.

Although Dr Hamer's appendix discussing Millais' illustrations of Trollope's novels is somewhat perfunctory with little consideration of Millais' abilities as designer, for which reproductions of illustrations would have been necessary, her book illuminates how Trollope's aspirations and the ethos and publishing conventions of his society all helped to shape his novels.

*University of Nottingham* SHEILA M. SMITH

**The Lunar Light of Whitman's Poetry.** By M. WYNN THOMAS. Pp. xii+314. Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1987. £17·95 net.

Thomas's central thesis is that 'Whitman lived through and was closely identified with a decisive transformation in the social character and structure of New York and Brooklyn . . . The change from the artisanal to the post-artisanal system of

production' (pp. 69, 70), and that his poetry 'can . . . be usefully regarded as a contribution to this struggle toward redefinition' by the craft workers (p. 28). While, according to Thomas, before the Civil War 'changes . . . in the socioeconomic order continued to be thinkable, with the aid of poetry, in terms derived essentially from a rapidly disappearing phase of capitalist endeavor', afterwards 'such a conception was entirely out of the question' and 'Whitman was faced with what had been the . . . foreign character of the prewar American scene now made brazenly . . . evident in a way that virtually rendered his poetry obsolete' (pp. 2–3).

This view presents a number of difficulties. So-called 'economic' and 'social' events cannot accurately be separated from other events. Here they are for the most part discussed generally and abstractly, without many dates and never in terms of individuals. Few primary sources are used. Social groups are distinguished in a vocabulary borrowed from descriptions of European societies (based on Marx and notions of British class). Perhaps the biggest difficulty is the attempt to do without Whitman himself. Sometimes it appears as if it were Whitman's major purpose to comment on changes in 'the socioeconomic order', as if he were not a poet, but Marx or Veblen, as if he had no personal stake in his own poetry.

Thomas's comments often seem, at best, tangential to Whitman's poems. For example, he states that Whitman's use of light resembles that of Lane, Heade, Kensett, and Gifford in which 'light radiates a permanent calmness' (p. 96). He says that if Lane's 'Boston Harbor' and Salmon's 'Boston Harbor from Constitution Wharf' in which 'human beings in the very midst of their activities' are 'transfixed and preserved by the light' 'could only be supplied with the richer glow', then we would have an 'approximation of the tranquil surface experience' of 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry'.

'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry' is illuminated by the light of the setting sun and there are references to the play of light and shadows at the beginning, but the light neither 'radiates a permanent calmness' nor holds 'the scene steady' (p. 98). Except for 'The sailors at work in the rigging . . .', it is not the people who are active in the poem and no one is 'transfixed' by the light. The scene is curiously devoid of persons. The ferry 'crowds' are named but undescribed.

The scene, however, is not still, but in motion. This is perhaps the most important fact about the poem. Whitman has located the poem so as to maximize the changes. He insists on the movement. He feels the past flowing into the present and the present flowing into the future. Moreover, Whitman does not want the scene to hold still. The final section is a series of imperatives in which he commands the world to continue doing what it is doing, as if he is afraid that otherwise it might stop. Here light is not a major concern. I cannot find anything in the poem to substantiate Thomas's claims that light is 'a coded form of social discourse' (p. 100), that 'light comes to remedy deficiencies in the . . . social landscape' (p. 101), and that the choice of time and place is 'an index of social perspective' that highlights 'the difference between a prerevolutionary and postrevolutionary outlook' (p. 101).

The final third of the book is the most interesting. Thomas is at his best in discussing Whitman's response to the Civil War. He shows (pp. 180–5) that Whitman's pre-war poetry about the West can be related to his support for the Free Soil movement and that for Whitman the War was fought more to secure a future in the West for white working men than to free the slaves. This, Thomas argues (pp. 192–200), helps us to understand the enthusiasm for the War in the poems at the start of 'Drum Taps'. He is excellent on the mounting strain on the poet of the horrors he witnessed as a hospital visitor and shows his deep concern for the unidentified and unfound dead—what Whitman called 'the strayed dead'. In 'A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Thin', Whitman describes how one by one he lifts the blankets

covering the three forms on stretchers near the hospital tent. Thomas writes: 'He gazes into the ghastly faces of the dead, and so restores to them their individual features, their human identities, even though their actual names, personalities, histories, remain concealed from him' (p. 216). There are many fine touches such as this.

*University of Fribourg* ROBERT REIDER

**Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture.** By BRAM DIJKSTRA. Pp. xvi+454. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987. £34·50 net.

*Idols of Perversity* is a contribution to the story of the genesis of the cultural configurations that ultimately produced the ideology of Nazi Germany, but *en route* was responsible for an unhealthy set of attitudes towards women in the bourgeois world of the nineteenth century. It is a fascinating and alarming study, in direct descent from works such as Mario Praz's *Romantic Agony*. Like Praz, Dijkstra's approach is interdisciplinary, and he believes that to make an assessment of the state of mind of a culture all the arts and all the statements of philosophers and other commentators have to be taken into account. A staggering number of pictures are reproduced, many of them completely unfamiliar to scholars of the period.

The thesis is that a widespread set of topoi concerned with women, many of them of course derived from previous ages, might seem of not much significance in art—they are thematic material on which painters and poets worked, and our principal area of interest has traditionally been stylistic, so that in many art histories it is not usual to speak of Cézanne in the same breath as John Charles Dollman or William Adolphe Bouguereau or J. M. Heinrich Hofmann, but since they all painted *The Temptation of St. Anthony*, bacchanal scenes, and *Leda and the Swan* they find themselves in each other's company as indicators of the climate of the time. Dijkstra writes: 'Thomas Couture and Cézanne were brothers under the skin at least in their enthusiastic pursuit of bacchanals' (p. 214).

This study takes its place amongst a number of others that have turned their attention to neglected nineteenth-century art, and have ignored 'impressionist concoctions'. Much of this was salon art; it was accepted and theoretically safe for the bourgeois consumers, and at a remove from their own blameless lives, even though the subject-matter was often pretty lurid—rapes, vampirism, bestiality, etc. It was 'safe' because it was art, and existed in some separate world. But Dijkstra shows that *risqué* and exotic themes never succeed in being entirely isolated from the mundane world, and that, albeit in an oblique fashion, these works impinge on actual behaviour and sentiments in the diurnal world. He also shows that although many of the paintings, sculptures, and pieces of exotic literature have their origins in ancient classical myth, the commitment to the subjects is often not antiquarian, retrospective, or aesthetic, but intellectual and ideological and sometimes deeply instinctual. Paintings of fauns and maenads are not always escapist whimsy (although they are that sometimes), since sometimes they tie in with advanced ideas being pursued by scientists and psychologists. So writers like Lombroso and Nordau partly stimulated the search in the darker corridors of the decadent consciousness for illustrative material. Some of this material may have been intellectually disreputable, and in view of its legacy—Belsen and Buchenwald—lamentable, and it is even more disconcerting to find that often it informs art that we now regard as good, as well as art that we might prefer to forget. It is always possible to find even in 'classic' writers data that grows directly from the immediate and modish concerns of the times. Considered against the background of its time there is nothing so very *outré* in Yeats's *Leda and*